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CBC Newsletter

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For members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

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Number 5

Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting Coming to Southport NC!

John Voigt

Which Christmas Bird Counts generally rank in the top five for the highest number of species in the Carolinas? Would you like the opportunity to bird there?

The answer to the first question is those in the Lower Cape Fear. The answer to the second question is that the opportunity is on the way!

Can you believe the CBC has never held a winter meeting in the Southport area? It's time to fix that and **hold the dates!** The CBC is coming to Southport, NC for our 2012 winter meeting, to be held January 27-28.

The Lower Cape Fear offers some of the best winter birding spots in the Carolinas with a variety of habitats including ocean, maritime forests, mudflats, freshwater lakes and marshes, pine forests and more. Southport's unique location is near winter hotspots including Ft. Fisher, Kure Beach, Wrightsville Beach, Bald Head Island, Oak Island, Sunset Beach, Airlie Gardens, Brunswick Town, and Boiling Spring Lakes. With hotspots like these it's easy to see how birders at the most recent Southport/Oak Island/Bald Head Christmas Count located 170 plus species!

The Southport area gives you the hope of seeing hard to find or rare birds. The 2011 Southport Christmas bird count included Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sparrows, Orange-crowned Warblers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Marbled Godwits, four Rail Species, Peregrine Falcon,

Merlin, Great Cormorant, Anhinga and all three American scoter species. The write-in species (never counted on, but always exciting) include Ross's Goose, Dickcissel, Bachman's Sparrow and Parasitic Jaeger. With your help we hope to expand upon this list!

The headquarters for our winter meeting will be the Southport Wingate Hotel by Wyndham. Built less than three years ago, the Wingate hotel provides our group with an extremely attractive home base. Rooms with one king-size bed are \$79.95. Rooms with two queen-sized beds are \$89.95 (taxes are not included in these room rates). The hotel price includes a free, hot continental breakfast. All rooms come with free high-speed internet access plus coffee makers, safes, and hair dryers. The street address for the Wingate hotel is 1511 North Howe Street, Southport, NC 28461. The phone number for making reservations is (910) 454-0086. When you call, mention you're with the Carolina Bird Club and that our code is CGBIRD.

Look for a registration form and trip descriptions in the next CBC Newsletter.

The Southport planning team is currently working on developing additional field trips and in-the-hotel activities for the winter meeting. Stay tuned and make your plans now to see old friends, make new friends, see great birds, and hear excellent speakers in Southport. See you there!



See the Cranes with the CBC! Sandhill Crane Migration—Nebraska March 28-April 1, 2012

500,000 Sandhill Cranes. 80% of the world's population of Sandhill Cranes at one place and mostly at the same time. Considered one of nature's greatest migration spectacles.

Sound exciting? Then come and join us! The CBC is pleased to announce the offering of a bonus trip to the Platte River Valley of Nebraska to witness the spring migration of Sandhill Cranes. We will start from Omaha, Nebraska and bird our way to the section of Platte River between Grand Island and Kearney where hundreds of thousands of cranes await. Among the abundant gray Sandhill Cranes we will search for the majestic white Whooping Crane. While rare, the Platte River is one of only a few places that Whoopers can be found with some regularity during migration. If we are super lucky we might catch a glimpse of an even rarer bird, the Common Crane. Cross your fingers!

Evening will find the group tucked into a viewing blind along the river for an up-close and personal look as thousands of cranes arrive to roost in the river and on mid-stream sandbars. This should be an experience none will forget!

Because the arrival of the cranes in the evening and their departure in the morning provide somewhat different experiences, we plan on a second trip to the viewing blinds Friday morning to watch the cranes depart for the day.

After thoroughly birding the river valley, we will head north into the Nebraska Sandhills to search out another of the iconic prairie birding experiences, the mating dance of the Greater Prairie-Chicken. Each spring, as they have done for thousands of years, male prairie-

chickens arrive on communal display grounds called leks. Birds, sometimes by the dozen, display by inflating air sacs, dancing, and "booming". We have reservations at one of the best viewing leks in the state.

As we work across Nebraska we hope to build a trip list of birds that include targets such as Harris's Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Northern Shrike, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Rough-legged Hawk and more.

The trip will start and end in Omaha, Nebraska. Included in the trip fee, estimated to be **\$650 per person**, with a \$225 single supplement, is lodging, ground transportation, entry fees, one dinner, at least one breakfast, and guided birding each day. Not included is transportation to/from Omaha, most meals, and items of personal nature. A deposit of \$300 is due by December 15 with full payment by February 1. Full refunds are given if you must cancel up to 45 days prior to the trip's departure date. Cancellations within 45 days of departure allow for a refund if someone can be found to take your space.

Interested? Act soon as the trip is **limited to 8 participants**. This will ensure comfort in the vehicles and a more personal experience for each participant.

Trip leaders for the Sandhill Crane Migration are Brian Pendergraft and Steve Shultz, who recently visited Nebraska and are excited to share their "finds" with you!

For more information, answers to questions, or to put your name on the list, contact Steve Shultz at sshultz@nc.rr.com or by phone at (919) 779-2826.

Christmas Bird Counts

While it may feel a bit warm outside to even think about the Christmas Bird Count season, it is never too early to start planning! If you are the coordinator of a Christmas Bird Count in the Carolinas and would like to have your count's date and coordinator contact information made available on the CBC website, please send your name, e-mail address, phone number and the name and date of the count to: newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org

Color Marked Arctic-Breeding Shorebirds



The Arctic Shorebird Demographic Network (ASDN) is an international collaboration between shorebird biologists who are currently conducting a multi-year study to examine mechanisms behind declines of North American Arctic-breeding shorebirds. The Network collaborators' are color-marking shorebirds at seven sites in Alaska (Yukon Delta, Nome, Cape Krusenstern, Point Barrow, Ikpikpuk River, Prudhoe Bay and the Canning River) and four sites in Canada (Mackenzie Delta, East Bay and Coates Island in the northern portion of Hudson Bay, and Churchill).

We would be delighted to receive reports of color-marked shorebirds observed away from the breeding grounds. Please look for marked birds of the following species and fill out the following re-sighting report:

- American Golden-Plover
- Semipalmated Plover
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Whimbrel
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Dunlin
- Western Sandpiper
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Stilt Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Red Phalarope
- Red-necked Phalarope

All ASDN birds are marked with a white (Canada) or dark green (USA) flag and a color band. The engraved flags will have a 3 letter code of letters or numbers, written in white on the green flags or written in black on the white flags, and an additional color band (e.g. red, dark blue, orange, dark green, yellow) below the flag. Most birds will also have three unique color bands on the opposite leg to further facilitate individual identification during the breeding season, as well as a US Geological Survey/ Canadian Wildlife Service metal band with a unique serial number.

Inquires about the Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network can be directed to:

River Gates, Network Field Coordinator,
US Fish and Wildlife Service,
Migratory Bird Management
1011 East Tudor Rd. MS201
Anchorage, Alaska, USA
(907) 786-3563.

hrivergates@gmail.com

Re-sighting forms may be obtained from:

Craig Watson
South Atlantic Coordinator
Atlantic Coast Joint Venture
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Division of Migratory Birds (Region 5)
176 Croghan Spur Rd., Suite 200
Charleston, SC 29407
(843)727-4707, ext. 304

2011-2012 Federal Duck Stamp Now Available

The 2011-2012 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, more commonly known as the "Duck Stamp", is now available for purchase. While the stamp is required for hunting migratory waterfowl, non-hunters frequently purchase the stamps for their artistic qualities as well as their conservation aspect; ninety-eight cents of each dollar are used to purchase or lease wetlands for the National Wildlife Refuge system. This year the stamp features a pair of Greater White-fronted Geese. Also known as "speckles" or "speckle-bellies", the geese are a common wintertime sight at National Wildlife Refuges and wetlands in the central United States and in California where the majority of the North American population winters. In the Carolinas the geese are rare to uncommon, and many of the birds seen here in winter come from the Greenland race. Stamps are \$15 each and can be purchased at www.usps.com or at major local post offices and outdoors stores.



Birder's Book Review

Lena Gallitano



Extreme Birder: One Woman's Big Year
Lynn Barber
ISBN 978-1-603244-261-9, 288 pages
2011, Texas A&M University Press, \$29.95

At least one Carolina birder and a good friend of mine reported he was birding vicariously during these hot summer days by reading Lynn Barber's book *Extreme Birder: One Woman's Big Year*. Indeed, Lynn's book is good summer reading, or perhaps one to have on the bookshelf for a cold, snowy winter day. While I confess I cannot be impartial since Lynn is a dear friend and I birded with her during her Big Year, I still enjoyed reliving our adventures from her perspective. But *Extreme Birder* is more than just a chronicle of the trips and birds, as Lynn also shares her talent as a photographer, artist, and poet throughout the book.

Perhaps the following comments will entice you to find a place for *Extreme Birder* on your bookshelf:

"Lynn Barber challenges a traditionally male-dominated pursuit--the birding Big Year--and is successful beyond her wildest dreams. She is an inspiration for all who love adventure, nature, and birds."--Lynn Hassler, author, *Birds of the American Southwest*

"Any birder who begins a new year by writing a list of birds seen will want to join Lynn as she goes through the year trying to find new birds for her Big Year. A bird addict whose urge can only be satisfied by seeing a new bird. . . and then. . . another new bird."

--Sandy Komito, author, *Birding's Indiana Jones, A Chaser's Diary*

"This is a book for birders who wish to understand the daily chronicle of extreme birding. I have nothing but

admiration and not a little bit of envy for Lynn Barber's Big Year odyssey. Her discipline, her rigor, her humor and her passion are found in very few; she is one in a million."

--Jane Alexander, actress and birder

"Anyone who's ever chased rare birds or dreamed of doing a Big Year (of any flavor), will identify with *Extreme Birder: One Woman's Big Year*. If you've read *The Big Year*, and thought 'that sounds like fun!'...read *Extreme Birder* to find out what completing an ABA Big Year is really like."

-- Greg Neise

CBC to Celebrate 75th Anniversary Save the Date: May 4-6, 2012 Raleigh, NC "The Birthplace of the CBC"

The 2012 Spring Meeting will be a very special celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Club's founding in March 1937. Look forward to special events, field trips, remembrances of past times, and a wonderful and engaging keynote speaker. We are excited to have Pulitzer Prize nominated and internationally known writer, birder, and speaker Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere With Migratory Birds*, *Return to Wild America*, and *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*. Plan now to join us for this exceptional weekend, and watch for details in future newsletters.

Eastern North Carolina Vice President Position Filled

The previously vacant Executive Committee position of Vice President representing Eastern North Carolina has been filled. President Marion Clark appointed Mark Buckler of Corolla, NC to fill this important role. Mark is the Director of the Pine Island Sanctuary & Audubon Center in Corolla, and a well-known wildlife photographer. Mark was the keynote speaker at the 2009 Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival.

The Vice President serves a single three-year term. Mark's term is scheduled to run through 2014.

Cape Fear Audubon's Bird-Friendly Habitat Award Program

Charley Winterbauer

The news sounds familiar. You open a non-profit's bimonthly magazine and read that a new study shows that populations of Neo-tropical birds are declining. The newspaper runs a piece on the conversion of woodlands to suburban neighborhoods. One estimate indicates that we are losing our migratory songbirds on an average of 1% per year. So what is being done to try and help? Along the lines of the "think globally; act locally" mantra, the Cape Fear Audubon Society has launched a new program to start to combat this loss by encouraging people to modify their habitat (yard) to be more bird-friendly. This is accomplished by using more native plants in landscaping as well as other bird-friendly techniques. These efforts are outlined here with the intent to encourage other bird-lovers to begin some similar program in their area.

Why do this?

Over the last six decades dramatic changes to our natural environment in urban and suburban areas occurred. In our quest to make beautiful, conforming lawns we forced out necessary native plants. The U.S. population is over 304 million and is growing at a rate of approximately 8,640 each day. This results in over 2 million additional acres per year (the size of Yellowstone National Park) being converted from potential wildlife habitat to lawns, houses and businesses.

We are connected by four million miles of roads creating paved surfaces covering a space five times the size of New Jersey. We mow over 62,500 square miles of lawn (40 million acres), an area the size of North Carolina plus another 10,000 square miles, each summer. We replaced native plants with over 3,400 ornamental plants not native to North America.

According to author Douglas Tallamy, 54% of the continental U.S. has been converted to suburbs and cities; 41% more into various forms of agriculture.

One might go look at Google Earth and see a large percentage of green and disagree with those figures. Let's add some more to the mix. Before 1900, we had over 97 million acres of Longleaf Pine along the Atlantic coastal states. Now, we have about 3 million acres. A direct result of that loss is the Red-cockaded

Woodpecker's placement on the endangered species list. Prior to 1904, we had over 200 million acres of forest featuring the American Chestnut. Due to an imported fungus, a trivial number of chestnuts remain. The chestnut was one of the most prolific food sources for numerous birds and insects. So looking at Google won't show you what is missing, but will show the replacement of other vegetation that may not be as beneficial to our birds.

If we look at typical landscaping over the last 60 or so years, you will find many imports from overseas. These were touted to be insect resistant, and many fit right in with our climate and our aesthetic desires for showy blooms.

With those sad disclosures, it is no wonder that we are experiencing declining populations of birds that come here to nest in the spring. We now realize that those insects that were eating the native plants are essential to the livelihood of our birds. Let's stop for a moment and look at the complete food chain process. All living creatures on the earth depend upon the sun for energy to survive (with minor exceptions at thermal vents deep in the ocean). Plant life converts the sun's energy into material - simple sugars and carbohydrates. All the non-plant life survives from those plants or from something that eats the plant. Remove the plant in some manner and the chain is broken.

96% of all our birds depend on insects at some point in their life cycle. Many seed eaters switch to insects during the nesting cycle because the insect provides the proteins needed for developing young. Remember, many of the plant imports were touted to be insect resistant. This is simply explained in the evolution process of plants and insects. Consider our native plants in the Carolinas; for thousands and thousands of years, they evolved together. A plant would change its chemistry and an insect would change its tolerance. At any given point in time, the plant will be eaten some, but not enough to destroy it, and it would be enough for the insect to survive long enough to reproduce and be eaten by a bird or other predator. A balance is achieved.

(Continued on page 6)

Bird-Friendly Habitat Award Program (continued)

(Continued from page 5)

Take away the native plant and from the bird's survivability, you effectively take away the plant completely and you break the food chain. In the early stages of our reshaping of the nation's habitat, there were other places for the wildlife. As noted before, we are now at the 95% unnatural state, and there is literally no place to run. Our state, local, and national parks and green spaces are not enough.

What do we do?

Now with all of the doom and gloom stated, what can we do to reverse this process? It isn't easy to do it all at once, but it is very easy to do it a yard at a time by a large number of concerned people. In 2010 the Cape Fear Audubon Society of Wilmington launched a program called the Bird-Friendly Habitat Award Program. We offer awards to people that create a bird-friendly habitat around their house. We developed criteria to be used for the judging that consists of looking at the percentage of native plants being used and the number and composition of native plant buffers around the property. Also, it requires the use of natural mulch (leaf fallings) and the reduction or elimination of lawn area. In addition, the amount of tree canopy, the use of nest boxes, and inclusion of water sources are part of the criteria. We look at conservation practices such as rain barrels, composting, the control of invasive plants, and the elimination of pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

A real positive side effect of this kind of habitat is the

minimal upkeep that happens. Native plants don't require extra watering or chemicals. They have survived for thousands of years with the existing climate and nutrients.

In conclusion, if you were to adopt this idea, it is one of the many things you can do to improve the environment, and one that will allow you to see results fairly quickly. One of the positive results may be more species of birds hanging around your habitat! For more details, please visit our website at <http://www.capefearaudubon.org> and go to the "habitat award" tab. You can download the criteria we use along with the rationale for each item. We encourage anyone to steal our idea, improve on it, and change it to fit your specific area. We have been in contact with North Carolina Audubon, and our program will be fitting into some of their plans. It may not be called as it is now but the concept will be carried on. Having said that, we still need the concept to be initiated at a local level with the goal of getting all our bird lovers educated to the importance of a natural habitat.

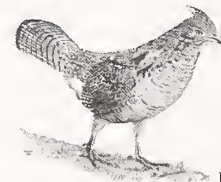
Questions may be sent through our website or directly to me at cewinterbauer@yahoo.com.

For an in-depth discussion of this topic, read Douglas Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home*. If you attend the CBC winter meeting in Southport, there will be a video presentation by Dr. Tallamy on *Bringing Nature Home*.

Wings Over Water 2011

Make your plans now to attend the 15th edition of Wings Over Water, a "Celebration of Wildlife & Wetlands in Eastern North Carolina". This year's festival runs from November 8th to November 13th and offers dozens of birding, photography, paddling, and other nature trips. This is one of the few times that birders can visit South Pond at Pea Island NWR (access is only through festival sponsored field trips). For information, trip descriptions, and registration, visit www.wingsoverwater.org or call (252) 216-WING(9464).

The opinions expressed in the CBC Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Carolina Bird Club or its members, but are those of the authors who have contributed material. All CBC members are encouraged to submit content for publication. Submitted articles may be edited for style, content, or length prior to publication. Submissions may be made in electronic format to newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org, or by mail to the address on the back cover.



H. Douglas Pratt



Outer Banks Field Trip December 10-11, 2011



Widely considered at the top of the list for early winter birding sites in North Carolina, the Outer Banks of Dare County are home to thousands of wintering swans, ducks, geese, shorebirds, waders, gulls, and more.

Join members of the Carolina Bird Club as we explore the Bodie Island lighthouse area, Oregon Inlet, Pea Island NWR, the ocean beaches of Hatteras and Bodie Islands and other "hotspots". The trip will focus on waterfowl and shorebird identification as well as building a broad trip list including everything from grebes to sparrows.

The trip starts Saturday at 8:00 a.m. at the Bodie Island Lighthouse parking lot and runs through dusk with a break for lunch. Saturday will be devoted to birding along the immediate coast. Sunday will include a stop at Alligator River NWR and potentially Palmetto-Peartree Preserve.

Birds that you can expect to see include loons, numbers of Tundra Swans and Snow Geese, most of the dabbling ducks that winter in eastern North Carolina, chances to see sea ducks including all three American scoters, winter shorebirds including American Avocet and possibly Purple Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher

and Piping Plover, gulls, and wintering passerines. Alligator River NWR may provide an opportunity to see Black Bear, raptors, shorebirds (if water levels are right) and numbers of Tundra Swan and waterfowl.

Logistics:

The fee for this field trip is \$10. Participation is limited to 15. Participants are responsible for lodging and meals. A number of motels, hotels, and other lodging are available in Nags Head north through Kitty Hawk. We will attempt to carpool in order to reduce the number of vehicles caravanning to the birding sites. Spotting scopes are useful if you have one. Dress for the weather and in layers. If we are enjoying a warm early winter, mosquito repellent may be useful. Lunch on Saturday will likely either be at a seafood restaurant or KFC. If you prefer, bring a bag lunch. The trip should end around noon on Sunday.

To register for this field trip contact Steve Shultz at sshultz@nc.rr.com or (919) 779-2826. Upon confirmation of your slot on the trip you will be sent a registration form/waiver that can be submitted with your trip fee.

Hope to see you there!



Get your CBC T-shirt, Sweatshirt and More With the Updated CBC Logo!

What better way to celebrate the new logo than to buy your very own hat, t-shirt, or hoodie? **The CBC now has an online store for ordering these and more!** Check it out by clicking on the "Online Store" link at: <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org>

A variety of casual-wear items for men and women are available. You choose the size and color! The perfect holiday gift for that hard-to-shop-for birder on your list

The most recent editions of the Newsletter and The Chat are online on the CBC website. All CBC members will use the same username and password to access these publications. The username is "**member**" and the password is "**birdfun**". This is a membership benefit, please don't share the password with non-members! The password will be changed from time to time, but can always be found in the most recent print edition of the Newsletter.

Go to <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/newsletter> to access the Newsletter, and <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/chat> to access The Chat.



Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
1809 Lakepark Drive
Raleigh, NC 27612



Upcoming CBC Meetings

Southport N.C. January 27-28, 2012
 Raleigh, NC May 4-6, 2012

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Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of December, February, April, June, August, and October.

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CBC Website: www.carolinabirdclub.org

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Membership dues of \$25 include \$4 for a subscription to *CBC Newsletter* and \$5 for a subscription to *The Chat*. Cost for CBC bird checklists, including postage: 10@\$2.50, 25@\$6, 50@\$11.75, 75@\$17.75, and 100@\$23.50. Submit application for membership, change of address, and payment for checklists to: CBC Headquarters Secretary, 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612. Copyright © 2011.

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